

AUDIT SCOTLAND REPORT ON IMPROVING CIVIL CONTINGENCIES PLANNING IN SCOTLAND

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

1. The Scottish Government welcomes the publication of Audit Scotland's report on '*improving civil contingency planning in Scotland*'. We would like to thank the Audit Scotland team for their helpful and constructive approach to the work. The report contains many useful suggestions for how we can improve the work on resilience across Scotland.

2. As the report acknowledges, much has changed since Audit Scotland undertook its field work in 2008. We have already built on some of the strengths and addressed some of the areas for improvement.

3. Recent months have seen a heightened level of activity as we have responded to the Influenza A (H1N1) outbreak. This has enhanced the collaborative working between Scottish Government, Strategic Coordinating Groups and Responder Organisations. Regular contact between all parties has helped to ensure the flow of information, the early detection of potential issues and queries, and a holistic perspective of the consequences of the pandemic.

4. The current response to the 'flu pandemic has borne out many of the strengths of Scotland's arrangements, as reported by Audit Scotland, but has also provided the opportunity and impetus to improve procedures. It has also accelerated some of the collaborative working which was already in progress.

5. The Government takes the Audit Scotland findings and recommendations very seriously and will work with all the relevant stakeholders including the UK Government on developing a long term, proportionate plan for a more resilient Scotland. That is why the Government has already scheduled an event on 2nd September which will bring together key stakeholders – in particular the chairs of the regional emergency planning Strategic Co-ordinating Groups (SCGs) and the members of the Resilience Advisory Board for Scotland (RABS) - to consider the Audit Scotland findings as well as the current state of Pandemic Preparedness. As a sign of the importance that Ministers place on this work, the event will be addressed by the Deputy First Minister.

Comments on specific recommendations

6. Initial responses to each of the detailed recommendations contained in the report are set out in the attached table. There are however a number of key overarching or sets of recommendations which the Scottish Government believes to be high priority. It is our belief that acting on these main recommendations (which has already commenced in many areas) will make it easier to address some of the other recommendations.

Governance and Accountability Arrangements for Decision Making

7. We believe the recommendations relating to governance and accountability are the most critical for ensuring a resilient Scotland. The Civil Contingencies Act does not give SCGs – or their English counterparts – legal status; this is unlikely to change in the short-term. However the Scottish Government and SCG Chairs have begun to explore options for clarifying governance and accountability arrangements for decision making.

8. Whilst progress over recent months has been delayed due to the focus on pandemic ‘flu activity, there has been consensus that tailored agreements between SCGs and Scottish Government may help to deliver increased efficiencies whilst clarifying accountability and governance arrangements. We are also considering other options for increased clarity over accountability and governance and will be discussing these further at the event on 2nd September and beyond.

Funding

9. For the most part it is a matter for national and local responder agencies to identify from the general resources available to each of them how much should be allocated to improving resilience. The Government’s objective in recent years has been to target the relatively small amount of central resources on the basis of careful risk assessment to support and enhance the work of other agencies.

10. For example, the Scottish Government has supported the multi-agency implementation of the Civil Contingencies Act by funding co-ordinator posts in each of the SCGs. We have also responded to several requests to fund local civil contingencies Training & Exercising Coordinators and, more recently, two senior Regional Resilience Adviser posts have been created with funding from Scottish Government (one in Grampian and one in Strathclyde). Providing pump prime funding for these roles, as well as other shared services initiatives, has enabled the Scottish Government to increase Scotland’s resilience capability and helped to drive efficiencies associated with multi-agency working.

Partnership Working (Including Stakeholder Engagement & Communication)

11. The recent ‘flu outbreak has served to accelerate work already underway to enhance partnership working between the Scottish Government and other agencies. However we recognise the need for further action in this area. Through partnership working in preparing for and identifying potential emergencies, organisations become better equipped to work closely together in responding to and recovering from emergency situations as and when they arise.

12. A range of actions is being planned to enable and simplify further partnership working at strategic and tactical level, ranging from creating new tailored agreements between the Scottish Government and SCGs, to involving more tactical level officers in multi-agency programmes and initiatives. We recognise that ensuring consistency of communication with such a broad and diverse group of stakeholder organisations at all levels requires continual evaluation and effort and are committed to continuing to

do this. The event on 2nd September will be another opportunity to identify ways to improve partnership working.

13. At a UK level, once again, the recent 'flu outbreak has led to increased collaboration and closer working. Scottish Ministers have participated in 18 Civil Contingencies Committee meetings relating to 'flu since the end of April. We will endeavour to learn the lessons from both this and other areas of engagement with the UK Government while at the same time continuing to look as part of the National Conversation at how resilience activity might be organised in an independent Scotland.

Measuring Preparedness

14. Measuring preparedness is a key underpinning activity which will lead to a more resilient Scotland. We have recognised the need for additional focus in this area for some time and as a result have already launched a programme of activity to support measuring preparedness.

15. The Scottish Government recently consulted on a draft suite of practical guidance and tools for measuring preparedness. Materials are also being developed to allow Scottish Government to measure its own preparedness.

Information Provision

16. We are interested in the Audit Scotland comments relating to the information provided by Scottish Government to stakeholders. Whilst on the one hand it appears that there are stakeholder groups for whom too much information is provided, on the other hand there appear to be groups who believe they do not receive sufficient information and leadership. Scottish Government recognises that ensuring the provision of consistent information at consistent levels to strategic level and tactical level individuals across multiple stakeholder organisations is and will remain a key challenge. Work is underway to increase stakeholder engagement and our event on 2nd September will include identification of lessons learned from the 'flu pandemic in terms of information provision.

Conclusion

17. Scottish Ministers recognise that the risks we face as a country remain significant. The Scottish Government has identified in recent years four key categories of risk: pandemic 'flu; terrorism; utility failure, and extreme weather.

18. Over the past three years, emergencies have arisen in each of these areas: 2007 saw the terrorist attack on Glasgow airport; 2008 saw the fuel crisis at Grangemouth; and 2009 has seen the start of the 'flu pandemic. Throughout this period there have been various severe weather incidents. In addition, there have been many other localised events, for example the Maich Dam break in Renfrewshire and this year's tragic North Sea helicopter crash, that have given rise to challenges for responders.

19. That is why Ministers are committed to continuing to lead the national efforts to achieve following outcome:

Scotland is as prepared as possible to deal with the consequence of any emergency because:

- Responder agencies are planning and exercising together effectively on the basis of a clear view of the risks;
- Have a good understanding of what capacity is available locally and nationally;
- Are using resources flexibly and pragmatically;
- Are ensuring individuals and teams are adequately trained, exercised and evaluated.

20. The Audit Scotland report on Civil Contingencies Planning in Scotland will help the Government and all relevant agencies, working together, to make further progress towards this desired outcome.

21. The Scottish Government looks forward to discussing the findings and recommendations with stakeholders at the event on 2nd September.

Scottish Resilience
August 2009

Annex B

Audit Scotland: Civil Contingencies Planning

Recommendations and the Scottish Government Response

Recommendation	Response
<i>In ensuring a resilient Scotland, Scottish Government recognises the need for, and takes steps to promote and foster collaborative working. Recent events have accelerated work in this area, which will continue to be a focus of effort both throughout the current pandemic and beyond.</i>	
The Scottish Government and Strategic Coordinating Groups partners should agree a standard approach to the sharing of civil contingencies planning information across Scotland.	<p>Although at an early stage of implementation, the UK Resilience Extranet (due to be launched late 2009) aims to provide a standard approach to the sharing of civil contingencies planning information across the UK including Scotland.</p> <p>The UK Resilience Extranet is a UK Government led project. Scottish Government has agreed via RABS to participate and recognises that success of the intranet will depend on 100% take-up. It is therefore now working to ensure take-up across Scotland. The intention is that the extranet will include a Scotland specific section for Scottish Government and the SCGs to share information.</p>
Strategic Coordinating Groups should review their membership to ensure key organisations are represented appropriately, and work to maximise the benefits of effective joint working, including across SCG boundaries.	Scottish Government supports this recommendation and believes it is something that can be achieved in the near future.

<p>The Scottish Government should review how it engages with those individuals who have day to day responsibility for civil contingency planning, and ensure that it provides consistent information.</p>	<p>Scottish Government recognises that ensuring the provision of consistent information at all levels across responder organisations is and will remain a key challenge. Over the past 6 months, efforts have been made to increase the involvement at all levels e.g. in the UK Extranet project and in reviewing Preparing Scotland Guidance. Scottish Resilience has also increased coordination of key messages to stakeholders e.g. through the creation of a core brief for Scottish Government staff attending SCG meetings.</p> <p>Scottish Resilience will continue to strive to provide consistent information.</p>
<p>In consultation with SCG members, the Scottish Government should clarify the governance and accountability arrangements for decisions made by the Strategic Coordinating Groups and for their own role during an emergency.</p>	<p>Scottish Government recognises that this is one of the key findings of the Audit Scotland Report and work is already underway to work with the SCG Chairs to determine a collaborative way forward. At a UK level, under the Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme, some consideration has been given to the case for giving Local Resilience Forums (the SCG equivalent in England) legal status. A number of issues have been identified and are likely to be taken forward during Phase 2 of the Programme. At this stage it is unclear what the outcome of this consideration will be.</p> <p>Scottish Government is however exploring options to clarify the governance and accountability arrangements for decisions made and actions taken in emergencies. The first action to be taken is to create tailored agreements which recognise legal and practical accountabilities between Scottish Government and SCGs and this work was started earlier in 2009.</p>
<p>Councils, police forces and fire and rescue services should ensure elected members are aware of their role in an emergency and of developments in civil contingencies planning.</p>	<p>Scottish Government agrees with this recommendation. Some elected members have recently been briefed and the pandemic 'flu situation is leading to increased awareness among elected officials.</p>

Planning for a Resilient Scotland	
<p><i>Scottish Government plans for and disseminates planning assumptions relating to overarching threats e.g. terrorist attack and specific threats e.g. pandemic 'flu. On an ongoing basis, risks are revised and re-assessed and planning assumptions are altered accordingly. In line with working together, Scottish Government encourages, promotes and supports cross-boundary and multi-agency approaches to planning for a resilient Scotland. The Resilience Advisory Board Scotland (RABS) structure is in place principally to support coordinated, strategic, multi-agency planning.</i></p>	
<p>Strategic Coordinating Group partners and the Scottish Government should work together to ensure that the full potential of Community Risk Registers in informing risks at local and national levels is realised.</p>	<p>A Seminar has been organised for September 2009, to allow the Scottish Government and responder organisations to discuss how the use of risks and consequence assessment and management to drive planning, might be improved. This event will be followed by a similar seminar for Scottish Government staff at the end 2009 / early 2010.</p>
<p>The UK and Scottish Governments, Strategic Coordinating Groups and individual organisations should work together to improve cross-boundary planning</p>	<p>This reflects the fact that planning for local emergencies is well developed. The ability to respond to and recover from events that go beyond a single SCG has been identified as a priority already – this is reflected in cross boundary capability being a key aspect of both the current CPD round and national exercises taking place in Scotland – led by both Scottish and UK Governments. For example training for SCGs – CPD seminars for SCGs incorporates cross boundary management and decision making issues.</p> <p>Additionally, Scottish Government is actively involved in the Cross Border Forum which has met three times since its inception in June 2008 and was established to facilitate cross border co-operation in relation to all civil contingencies matters that affect those represented (namely Government Office North East, Government Office North West, Scottish Government, Isle of Man Government and the military).</p>

	<p>Northern Ireland Executive attends as an observer).</p> <p>Recently, activity to respond to the 'flu pandemic has involved considerable cross-boundary working including the involvement of Scottish Ministers in over 18 Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC) meetings held by the UK Government to date and daily contact between officials in Scotland and Westminster over the past three months.</p>
Local responders should ensure that they have up-to-date emergency and business continuity plans and that staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities.	<p>Scottish Government recognises that having emergency and business continuity plans are important, but that the plans must be meaningful, regularly reviewed and updated, and integrated into the organisation. The existence of plans in and of themselves are not sufficient to ensure resilience. There is a need for work beyond the development of plans to ensure that organisations can improve their response to emergencies and overall resilience.</p> <p>Opportunities to achieve BS 25999 accreditation for example, as achieved by Lothian and Borders, takes time and concerted effort but it also provides a focus and benchmark as well as the ultimate external recognition well beyond that achieved by the creation of business continuity plans.</p>

<p>Local authorities must ensure they are providing business continuity management advice and assistance to local businesses and voluntary organisations. Strategic Coordinating Group partners should consider how they could add value to this process.</p>	<p>Scottish Government supports this recommendation as part of ensuring economic prosperity. The focus on joint working and risk assessment should highlight the importance of business continuity. Local authorities and Category 1 responders currently provide information on business continuity management, and can build on this to promote the additional benefits of business continuity management (including the potential to gain competitive advantage). As a key part of ensuring their own resilience, local authorities and responders should also ensure that their supply chain, subcontractors and voluntary sector partners have appropriate business continuity management in place.</p> <p>Scottish Government can assist in this effort by educating and publicising information regarding the value of business continuity management with the aim of changing culture so that business continuity management is seen as a core management task.</p>
<p>Scottish Government and local responders should work together to improve public awareness of the risks we face and developments during and after an event</p>	<p>Work on improving public awareness of risks is ongoing. The current 'flu campaign is a real example of how national government and local responders can work together on a national message for a situation, with resources provided to local responders to support them in their efforts.</p> <p>Scottish Government has already funded two projects on non-media public information including a national project run by Dumfries and Galloway which will report in August. It is anticipated that information from this project will inform Scottish Government's own public information resources for before, during and after emergencies.</p> <p>Finally, there are plans in place to develop a new Ready Scotland web portal which will have links to the SCGs to increase sharing of information. This is however currently on hold during the 'flu pandemic.</p>

Learning Lessons from training, exercising and incidents

Resilience is dependent on learning lessons from both real-life emergency situations and training and exercising. Scottish Government recognises this and as a result created the Scottish Resilience Development Service (ScoRDS) in 2007. Whilst mechanisms are in place to facilitate learning and ScoRDS works closely with SCG member organisations to achieve this, Scottish Government acknowledges the need for continual focus on lessons learned and sharing of best practice.

Strategic Coordinating Group member organisations and the Scottish Government should work together to ensure training and exercising is effectively targeted and coordinated and good practice is more widely shared.

The Resilience Advisory Board Scotland (RABS) Training & Exercising exists to identify the customer requirement for both training and exercising.

Since its inception in April 2007 ScoRDS has been working with representatives of responders at local level to design and deliver a programme of awareness raising. Continuous improvements have ensured that it remains relevant and appropriate. Cooperative working with local responders has ensured the success of the awareness raising programme which continues to be incrementally developed and enhanced.

Work has been done to ensure that national and local events can be centrally promoted on the ScoRDS website. Good practice guidance is already being published by ScoRDS and other organisations such as KRISMART in Sweden. The development of e-learning will help to make even more information available.

In 2008 a training needs analysis was carried out to assess the training needs of tactical level managers in responder organisations. The results were publicised and shared with the civil contingencies community and on the ScoRDS website. The results, along with a representative group of tactical managers in responder organisations, serve to inform the future development of tactical training.

	<p>Additionally ScoRDS has co-opted several practitioners at various levels, to support the development of training programmes.</p> <p>Scottish Government recognises there will always be room for further action in this area.</p>
Category 1 responders must ensure they are meeting the statutory requirement to exercise all emergency plans and their business continuity plan	Scottish Government endorses this recommendation.
Strategic Coordinating Group partners and the Scottish and UK government should ensure that lessons learned from training and exercising activities are systematically shared and implemented and that monitoring arrangements demonstrate their effective implementation.	<p>Scottish Government recognises the need to learn lessons from both live incidents and training and exercising. Whilst there will always be the need for tailored local implementation, there is already a process for gathering lessons learned from national exercises and training and to report on these to SCGs. In addition to recently issued good practice guidance on exercises, funding of debrief training for local practitioners and the inclusion of lessons learned in the CPD Programme for SCG Strategic Managers, further work is required on sharing lessons learned locally across SCGs and monitoring their effective implementation. There will be close links with the work on measuring preparedness discussed under recommendation para 193.</p>

Costs, Capacity and Performance in Civil Contingencies Planning

Over recent years a number of triggers have led to increased central spending on civil contingencies planning. The implementation of the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) and the realisation of the four highest risks (terrorist attack, flooding, fuel shortages and more recently pandemic 'flu) have necessitated additional focussing of resources on civil contingencies planning and response. Scottish Government has strived throughout this period to focus on those areas where most value can be added e.g. the promotion of multi-agency working through funding of SCG Coordinators and more recently Regional Resilience Advisors. Scottish Government fully recognises the need for continual management and measuring of outcomes and efficiencies in this area and has a number of initiatives in place to address this.

Strategic Coordinating Group partners should work together to develop a consistent framework for managing and reporting expenditure to demonstrate value for money and seek to deliver increased efficiencies and improved resilience through further partnership working

The recommendation to use further partnership working to deliver increased efficiencies and improved resilience is being treated as a high priority and an overarching action which will help to realise several other recommendations.

Work has been commenced to creating tailored agreements with SCGs which will include funding for an agreed work plan which will allow consideration of efficiencies etc. This work is on hold during the 'flu pandemic however the SCGs have agreed that they would welcome bilateral discussions and funding arrangements which are perhaps longer term than the current annual basis in return for certain commitments.

Scottish Government has also pump prime funded initiatives to promote and foster partnership working including funding the creation and maintenance of a new All-Ayrshire Emergency Planning Unit, and similarly a Joint Civil Contingencies Service for the Renfrewshire area.

Category 1 and 2 responders should develop formal mutual aid agreements. These agreements should take account of cross-border arrangements, and the voluntary and private sectors	Scottish Government and local authorities recognise the need for work to develop mutual aid agreements. Following a workshop in 2007, initial groundwork has been conducted by the local authorities, however conflicting priorities in both local authorities and Scottish Government (e.g. pandemic 'flu) have limited capacity to progress this work. As and when capacity is available, this work will be prioritised and progress should be quite quick to achieve.
Local responders, Strategic Coordinating Groups and the Scottish Government should develop arrangements for managing, monitoring and reporting their performance	<p>Scottish Government believes that managing, monitoring and reporting on performance in resilience is significant in ensuring value is added.</p> <p>In parallel with specific work on 'flu preparedness, work on developing a longer term system for measuring preparedness has already commenced. This will include a requirement for all SCGs and the Scottish Government to produce an Annual Statement of Preparedness. Supporting guidance and tools will also be made available to assist in the process of measuring preparedness. There is also an intention to set up a system of peer-led visits and conduct a Scottish Capabilities Survey on a three yearly basis. The Measuring Preparedness material includes a practical set of guidance and tools for measuring preparedness.</p>